

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The next section outlines a Community Vision for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County. The Vision speaks to hopes and dreams for the future of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska. The Vision is a statement of where the community sees itself in twenty five years — and in the years beyond.

The sections following put details to that Comprehensive Plan Vision. They describe how the ideas and ideals expressed in the Comprehensive Plan Vision will come about.

Fourteen sections highlight the key elements of the flourishing, vibrant community sought by this Plan. Each section describes a particular facet of everyday life and how the Plan's Vision sees it in the future — Where will people work? How will they get there? Where will they shop? Where will their children go to school? Where will there be parks and open spaces for them to enjoy? How will existing roads, sewers, and waterlines be maintained and new ones built? How will the Plan be put into place?

- ♦ Community Vision
- ♦ The Economy
- ♦ Business and Commerce
- ♦ Environmental Resources
- ♦ Residential
- ♦ Utilities
- ♦ Mobility & Transportation
- ♦ Information Technology
- ♦ Community Facilities
- ♦ Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- ♦ Historic and Cultural Resources
- ♦ Education
- ♦ Financial Resources
- ♦ Plan Realization

This section provides a discussion of the people and region that comprise Lincoln and Lancaster County. This background information will help to set the stage for the sections to follow.

OVERALL POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTION

This Comprehensive Plan embraces a growing, changing community. The Plan energetically recognizes the long term growth potential of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and of the fundamental demographic changes being experienced by the community.

Lancaster County's population is assumed to reach over 390,000 persons by the year 2030 — that's over 140,000 more people than the County's year 2000 population base of 250,291 persons. By the year 2050, the County's population is projected to reach 527,000 people, or over 277,000 more people than reside in the county today.

This growth is based on an assumed rate of 1.5 percent per year throughout the fifty year period. While the rate exceeds what the community has experienced since the 1960's (i.e., 1.2 percent per year), it does generally mirror the 1.6 percent growth rate of the 1990s. The 1.5 percent annualized figure provides a firm foundation for planning and fostering the community's expansion.

As will be examined later in this document, it is anticipated that the rate of growth will be routinely monitored as the Plan's Vision is put into place. This monitoring will be based on an array of growth and development factors that go beyond a simple estimation of the community's population.

Within this expanding population base, changes are also envisioned to occur in the community's demographic mix. Although no specific projections have been made, it is assumed that the city and county's future population will mirror several recent local and national trends.

For example, within the planning period the face of the community will witness further growth among existing racial and ethnic minority groups. Lincoln and Lancaster County's minority community more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. This increase was witnessed across all segments of the minority community – with notable growth occurring among Black/African Americans, Asians, "Other" racial groups, and persons of Hispanic origin. Increases within the minority community — both in absolute numbers and as a percent of the area's overall population — are anticipated to continue into the future. This trend is embraced by the Comprehensive Plan's Vision and is to be considered as the Plan's policies and programs are implemented.

A second demographic trend of significance is the continuing growth in the area's senior population. Issues relating to an aging population will increase in importance as more and more individuals reach the age of 65 and above. Over the next twenty five years, this segment of the community will similarly grow in number and as a percent of the overall population base. This will place greater emphasis on the unique transportation, housing, economic, and recreational needs of this expanding demographic segment.



URBAN, RURAL, AND VILLAGE GROWTH

As the County's population grows over the next fifty years, the Plan anticipates the distribution of the people residing in certain geographic areas of the county will remain at their present levels.

The City of Lincoln's population will stay at about 90 percent of the County's population. This means that Lincoln's population will reach beyond 350,000 persons by the year 2030, and to almost 475,000 persons by the year 2050.

The balance of the projected population is expected to reside in the County's smaller cities and villages, on farms, and in the rural areas on acreages. For purposes of long term planning, the population of the incorporated cities and towns will stay a little under 3 percent. Persons living in these jurisdictions will grow from the current level of 6,500 persons, to around 11,700 in 2030, and near 13,700 in the year 2050.

While no specific count is available on the number of people living on "farms," it is assumed that about one percent of the County's population are part of the "farming community." This means that around 2,500 people resided on farms in the year 2000. This figure would grow to nearly 3,900 persons in the year 2030, and top 5,000 by the year 2050.

The remaining population was assumed to live on acreages (either free standing or as part of rural subdivisions), on other farmsteads, and in the County's handful of unincorporated towns. This demographic element was calculated at around 15,700 in the year 2000, and would grow to about 24,400 by the year 2030, and exceed 33,000 by the year 2050.

POPULATION DENSITY

Since about 1970, Lincoln's population density has remained relatively consistent at around 3,000 persons per square mile. Certainly within the urban fabric there are variations from this norm. Areas of residential concentration near the Downtown and many of Lincoln's older neighborhoods have levels of density greater than this average. Conversely, there are locations on the urban fringe with newer neighborhoods having population densities below this level.

As the city experiences additional urbanization, the Plan assumes that the overall city-wide population density will stay at a level comparable to this figure throughout the initial 25 year planning horizon. Reaffirmation of this population density figure should occur in the future whenever a new Comprehensive Plan is being prepared for the community.

While sufficient developable land is designated in the Plan to accommodate an overall city-wide density comparable to the current figure, the community should strive to maximize efficiency in development.

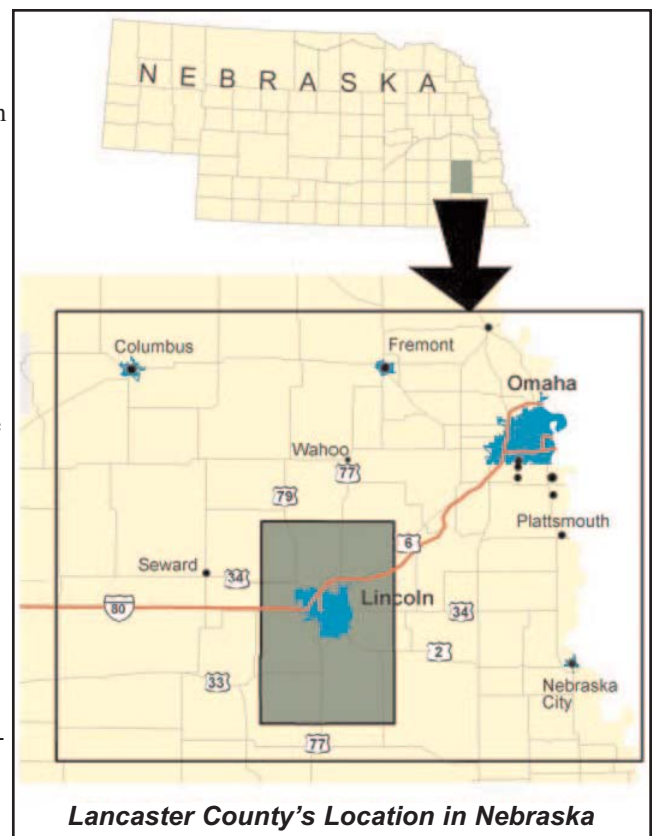
LONG RANGE REGIONAL PLANNING

Southeastern Nebraska is experiencing a growing sense of social, cultural, and economic interdependence. The Interstate 80 corridor in particular offers a major link between the State's two largest urban areas and the region as a whole. Strengthening ties between the two cities and the surrounding rural communities is integral to the region's future success in providing employment, recreational, and other opportunities.

Growth projections by the Lincoln-Lancaster County and Omaha Planning Departments envision a combined metropolitan population approaching 1.5 million people by the year 2050. Though beyond the nearer term planning horizon of this Comprehensive Plan, a fifty year perspective is not too long a period to use when viewing the growth and evolution of a region.

Sustaining a healthy natural environment, keeping a desirable quality of life for all, and forging a viable economy are but a few of this Plan's aspirations. To secure such ends for everyone in the larger region will mean a thoughtful coordination. Planning and growth issues will need to be approached with care. The communities involved need to reach a common understanding of the value to be placed on the region's natural, cultural, economic, and historic resources. Time will be needed to faithfully craft a vision for regional planning and development.

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County are committed to further examining regional planning issues for southeastern Nebraska. Much public dialogue about the future of the region



is needed if core planning issues and potential solutions are to be fully explored. The time frame for completing such work extends into the implementation period of this Comprehensive Plan. As the fruits of this effort become available, they should be considered for incorporation into the Plan.

EMERGING REGIONAL PLANNING ISSUES

Based upon preliminary discussions completed so far, a number of regional planning issues have emerged. These issues are important to communities throughout the region as they intimately affect how each community views its future. While these issues will not dictate a particular city's or county's given destiny, they are harbingers of planning trends and development forces that will impact the collective future of the region. These issues include:

- ♦ Urban growth, edge development, and community densities
- ♦ Regional transportation planning and community mobility
- ♦ Cooperative planning of infrastructure and concerns of overlapping jurisdictions
- ♦ Cooperative planning of education and public facilities
- ♦ Historic preservation planning and central urban revitalization
- ♦ Conservation and protection of environmental and natural systems
- ♦ Cooperative planning of water resource management
- ♦ Preservation of agricultural lands and the "right to farm"
- ♦ Affordable and low-income housing
- ♦ Cooperative planning for regional economic development
- ♦ Cooperative planning for shared technologies
- ♦ Cooperative planning for multicultural equity and diversity
- ♦ Assessment of State, County and Local public policies for sustainable communities
- ♦ System of sustainable community indicators
- ♦ Mechanisms for implementing and maintaining a system of cooperative planning